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BY

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CONTENTS.

ILARIA.

I.

ILARIA her Italian castle keeps :
  It is the Spring : the white walls top a hill
Sole in the plain : beneath lie woodland deeps,
  And open fields, and vineyards, and a still
Bright stream that curves and glides through all the
    land,
  And villages with church and bridge complete,
Gardens and copses—things which one might stand
  And feed the eyes on through an hour of sweet—
And everywhere young buds which to the light
Like music break, Spring's magic and her might.

II.

Amid this, like a morning mirage, shines
  The castle, glorious in the warm sky's sheen;
Like frozen symphonies its graceful lines
  Are hung between heaven's blue and earth's rich green;
A place with large halls and wide terraces,
  And galleries which love light feet, and bowers
Where one may quit the state of palaces,
  And by the window sit, and count the showers,
Or wake the secret spirit hid away
In an old harp, or dream on Dante's lay.

III.

Her father was a duke of high degree,
  And she sole heiress of his wide estate,
A brave man, strong and masterful was he,
  Had set his foot upon the neck of fate;
Her mother, gentle, dreamy, musical
  Of spirit, and of mild benignity;—
They from their distant dukedom watched the fall
  Of new life on the plains of Italy
When from long death renascent man awoke
And dealt about him many a lusty stroke.

IV.

But they loved pale antiquity, and held
  Their way apart from all the growth and change,
And walked in foolish, winding paths of eld,
  And were afraid to let their wishings range
Into the fine free world which then stept forth,
  Immortal youth like sunlight in his eyes,
And tried old rules, and searched if aught of worth
  Lay treasured in dead wrecks, and did despise
The timid times of monkish rule, and long
To fling to all lands liberty and song.

V.

O liberty, dear hope which made so fair
  Our fathers' outlook o'er the coming time,
Who saw you dropping through the azure air
  With bliss and blessing from heaven's golden clime,
Shall we for whom your toil has been so true
  Less love you, Oread, than when first you stept
From where the sun sweeps through his realm of blue
  To raise the faint, to dry the eyes that wept,
Entering, robed in hope, each humble door
With bliss and blessing for the pining poor?

VI.

Nay, but as for your bounty you have been
  Shrined in our gratitude, a thing to guard
With the arm's might and the heart's blood, our queen
  Whom the whole hive with reverent homage ward,
Even so shall you be still our joy, our prize,
  Our crown of honour, and our boast most proud,
Still for the pure fame of your peerless eyes
  A thousand poets shall chant long and loud,
Making wild music the deep woods among
And searching the far valleys with their song.

VII.

How does man dare to veil his selfish eyes
  To your most perfect smile? We love the day,
Children are sweet to all of us; the skies
  Are a good sight in the bright month of May;
We scorn not other strifes and changings great
  By which the world has climbed to happier things;
Yet thousands still your cause, your charter hate,
  And in some idle nook for need of wings
Of love to waft them to a holier sky
Dally and brood and sink and fail and die.

VIII.

Under the inspiration of your voice
  To social needs our scattered aims recall,
And in the rapt delight of hero choice
  Launch our strong youth at suffering's frowning wall;
Bind in the sweet chain of fraternity
  Both rich and poor, slaves of the cause beloved,
Brethren in art and sworn to do or die,
  Careless of self, by mighty yearnings moved;
On evil's host will fall strange fluttering fears
Watching the glancing glory of their spears.

IX.

And a new England will be born and smile
  In the fresh morning of the buoyant May,
And the glad spirit of our jocund isle
  Revel in life's reanimated play,
When wealth no more shall grind its minions down,
  But, spread in common keeping, gladden all,
When men no longer in the hideous town
  Shall hopeless work, nor women helpless fall,
But our grand commonwealth of ancient tears
Shall rest in the late solace of the years.

X.

So the Count Claudio to his dying bed
  Fretted and pined, because on every side
He saw the old life, the old peace was fled,
  And heard the nearing and resistless tide
Of popular right buffet the frail sea-wall
  Of antique fashion, and the wild waves break
All up the shore, and the shrill sea-bird's call
  Troubling his sleep; and at the dawn a streak
Of splendid promise in the East of time
Dazzled his faint eyes, dim with aged rime.

XI.

But through all barriers of the universe
  Good calls to good, and truth finds out the true;
All holy hopes to break the enchaining curse
  Of birth in sluggard days must find a few
Bold hearts to whom they are the breath of hope,
  And high Ilaria under the cold eyes
Of soulless parents the too narrow scope
  Of her foredestined course needs must despise,
And freely gave her heart's unquenched desire
To lend its flame to Freedom's altar-fire.

XII.

Who has not known the hush, the peace which lingers
  In halls where years agone the spirit came
Of the old middle age? His dreamy fingers
  Have touched the walls, the ceilings, and the same
Weird charm, the same imperious silence, lies
  Upon them in our time of haste and change;
Old longings, fearings; sacred memories;
  In rooms untenanted a presence strange;
A beckoning ghost which still before us flies,
A voice which calls and, ere we follow, dies.

XIII.

So brooded over by the dead world's dreams
  Old Claudio's castle slept. It was a cave
Of thoughts which ran like creeping winding streams
  In reeking vales mist-shrouded; 'twas the nave
Of a dark disroofed minster, where no chaunt
  Links age to age in music's mystic chain,
Where in the dusk aisles which sad spirits haunt
  Sweep the bleak blasts and falls neglect's cold rain;
Yet there, in the pale kingdom of the dead,
Youth like a wild-flower raised its perfect head.

XIV.

Amid the stealthy motions of the place,
  The subdued tone, the sad monotony,
Ilaria, stately as an old-world grace,
  Free as green leaves which laugh in the clear sky,
Nursed visions of the victory of light,
  Of king and noble bound in iron chain,
Of world-wide rule of all-compelling right,
  And caught afar an echo of the strain
Which liberated man shall raise one day
When tyranny and fears have passed away;—

XV.

A lady made to be in her sweet sphere
  A constant gladness, and to every eye
A steadfast solace and a boon most dear,
  Whether the courtiers might gaze lingeringly
On haughty brow, or gay and subtle mouth,
  Or joy to dwell on the full bosom's wealth,
Or find how to a noble spirit's drouth
  Her form's whole semblance was a fount of health,
A temple whose each stone one might adore
Warmly, for all was grand, all perfect-pure.

XVI.

And if this lady was by nature's hand
  So fitted to beguile of weary woe
Poor human hearts, not less her soul was planned
  To match within her outward beauty's glow;
I wis her thought was but a drop of dew
  Which gleams like crystal in the sun's great light
For sweetness and for chasteness, but she knew
  Deep passion's sting to love the difficult right,
And blast with scorn, more awful for its grace,
All shameful crimes which hurt our sacred race.

XVII.

Like all sweet natural things that wake to life
  At the strong impulse of an outward call
Of sun, or love, her spirit without strife
  Its ripe perfection and its honours all
Took from God's hand. Wise was her mind and true,
  And her sweet will was like a shining sword,
Blithe was she as a lark in heaven's blue,
  Gallant her motion was, soft was her word,
And like a bud's scent when the clouds have wept
Her prayer rose from her pillow ere she slept.

XVIII.

Glad am I that no poet ever scaled
  That castle's stair: unmanned he must have been;
His panting o'erworn courage would have failed
  To win the white hand of this gracious queen;
He would have died, and she would have been sad,
  And trouble on the gardens and the towers
Had lain, and spoiled the sunshine. I am glad
  Fate never led my footsteps to those bowers,
Glad to forego death for her sake, and save
Her pitying heart from teasing o'er my grave.

XIX.

She made her halls the home of happiness,
  Evil and folly could not bide her look,
Jests lost their sting and pain of heart its stress
  When she was by. Her spirit was a book
Wherein no word was writ but what could raise
  The meanest scholar to some high desire,
No harmless thing she blamed, but most would praise
  Such earnest talk as springs from holiest fire,
The God in man who on his shoulders bears,
Like Atlas, the ripe winnings of the years.

XX.

And withal she was simple as a child,
  And when a grave and reverend scholar came
Would at his footstool sit, enquiring, mild,
  As one who nothing knew; albeit a flame
Rose in her cheek when wise words went about,
  As when from exile in a hated place
A man comes home and hears his comrades shout,
  And fondly dwells on each familiar face,
So leapt her soul from learned lips to take
The truths which unto life and goodness make.

XXI.

And now the Count is dead, and the sad times,
  And she of all that realm the chatelaine,
Cheerily run the seasons like glad chimes,
  The seasons of her kind and gracious reign;
Her smiles are looked for in the villages,
  Her smiles make every sickness a glad thing,
Her smiles light up her halls when the sun dies
  And make the hearts of all her servants sing;
Amidst her people like a ray of light
She passes, and joy blossoms in her sight.

XXII.

The viol and the trumpet and the fife,
  The tambour and the drum throb through the halls,
Laughter's light fount and wit's unending strife,
  The soaring song, the dance which never palls,
Haste Time's quick step through the delighted day,
  And ever ere the buoyant circle parts
The lady some old legend will assay
  With high romance to filch away their hearts;
Then into rest the heavy revellers die
Laden with love of life and jollity.

XXIII.

And thus the sun shone ere the shadows fell,
  Pale shadowy clouds moved o'er the sun's own brow,
And she who queened it o'er the mirth so well
  Felt a cold finger chill her heart. I trow
In all her joy which seemed the fated vent
  For her soul's impulse she had never lost
The old enthusiastic ravishment
  For freedom, which now thrills her at her post,
And in a sea of happiness she lies
Becalmed, despairing under cloudless skies;

XXIV.

And all her talk was of the load which lay
  Like lead upon the spirits of the poor,
Who wake to meanest task-work day by day,
  Who pine and sin in darkness; to whose door
No cheering angel comes; nor art, nor grace
  Of living, nor delight of thought, nor glance
Backward or forward, nor Hope's sunny ray
  Summoning them to attend her fearless dance,
And how some help might to such folk be given
And the hard fetters of their bondage riven.

XXV.

Old men would bring her tales of suffering,
  And boys their schemes of plot and outbreak fierce,
And she would hear, as sick some aid to bring
  Yet very sad, for all too huge to pierce
The cloud of trouble loomed, and she was weak—
  A solitary longing hid away
In unloved luxury. Oh might she break
  Her gilded chain and give her wild heart play,
And strike one bloody blow before she died
At the grim thrones of selfishness and pride!

XXVI.

This grew : the girlish dream to be content
  To bless one home and glad with smiles few eyes
Grew mockery in an earth with suffering spent.
  Unto her in the night-time came the cries
Of bleeding armies, and the shout of lust
  Forcing the weak gate of a maid's despair,
Humanity at labour in the dust
  Feeding proud culture delicate and rare,
And all the heart-break and the misery
Of the world's "is" matched with its large "might be."

XXVII.

The innocent idlesse of her court, the gay
  Merriment of her maidens, her own heart
Which would anon assert its youth and play
  With keener zest than all, shot like a dart
Into her deeper, newer life. And yet
  One lonely lady, what help could she bring?
What could she do but vex her heart, and fret,
  And dash against her cage, and break her wing?
A lark whose bourne was in the gleaming light
By cruel hands locked from the bliss of flight.

XXVIII.

She told it all to the Italian night
  Throned in dusk glory o'er the peaceful plain,
When, wearied by the smiles she now must slight,
  With flushed cheek her soft chamber she might gain,
And lean her gracious head in the cool air,
  And feel the flood of loveliness like sleep
Invade her heart and clear away its care,
  And whispering throngs of wingèd hopes would creep
Out of the starlight o'er the sill, to rest
In the warm sanctuary of her breast.

XXIX.

How could she look and keep a sorry heart?
  Her flushed cheek owned the cooling breeze's charm,
Like routed foes she felt her cares depart
  Into the night, and large and solemn calm
Usurp her bosom's throne. It could not be
  That all this speaking grace should be a shroud
To wrap her heart in death-like misery,
  Lorn of near sympathy, lost to the crowd,
That she should prisoned pine for aye, nor move
With loving deeds into this world of love.

XXX.

At such an hour, when all the stars looked on
  Bright, patient children of the firmament
Whose clear eyes shed on earth sweet benison,
  Eager for thought's loved rest, with troubling rent,
The lady to the silence of her room
  Is gone away, secure at last to find
Seclusion, and cool rest, and grateful gloom
  Such as the mind's sprites love to revel in,
And, flooding through the woven Oriel's bars
With mild sustaining hope, the stars! the stars!

XXXI.

Glad to be free, with night and solitude
  For comrades, her low seat she seeks. The jar
Of closing revels cannot there intrude,
  The dying music and the wordy war;
The white fair curtains in a gentle wind
  Shadowily in the darkness move; a breath
Of odorous message upward steals to find
  Their mistress from the grateful flowers beneath;
A hundred subdued radiances stray
Out of the heaven, and on the carpet play.

XXXII.

Far, far beneath her, in dim distance shrouded,
  Expands the valley, and its starlit river
Creeps under low trees Oceanward. Unclouded
  Is the dark brow of night, whose jewels quiver
Unendingly, Orion and his peers,
  The Pleiads, that meek sisterhood of light,
Arcturus in his pride, and he who cheers
  The shepherd, sorrowing for the day's flight,
Hesper, beneath whose eye the forests swoon,
Expecting the slow rising of the moon.

XXXIII.

"O silence" (so she speaks), "O rarest show
  Of ancient night, O wood, O vale, O river,
All heavy pain which human spirits know
  Still have ye healed and will assuage for ever;
After the dismal merriment of day
  All great good thoughts in your wide calm return,
Unmating joys and sorrows slip away,
  Once more my eye can weep, my heart can burn,
Out of the dark I feel strange solace come
And nestle in my heart as in a home.

XXXIV.

"To thee at least I may confess that all
  My life, my way, my doom in hopeless shade
Is folded. Old delights and courses pall
  Upon me. Can it be that I was made
With fiery spirit cased in moving form,
  With lip to speak and hand just deeds to do,
To creep in joy's dark burrow like a worm,
  Nor listen to the voice which bids me go
Into the busy haunts where men abide
And act, feel, weep, strive, suffer by their side?

XXXV.

"Stern prison walls of ease and happiness
  Incarcerated in whose cold restraint
My sisters and my brothers dwell, and bless
  The chain which keeps them piteous slaves, I faint
To break your doors, to slay the sentinels,
  To set the smiling captives nobly free,
And scatter them o'er mountains and o'er fells
  Where, if they will not do, still may they see
How nature scorns that any living thing
Should pine in narrow pen with skyless wing.

XXXVI.

"Ah! give me life, the life of winds and waves,
  Of boundless heavens, of fruitful endless plains,
Of aught which largely lives or strongly raves,
  Or wins through biting griefs unbounded gains,
A life in tune with the strong elements
  And mighty motions of the world, a part
Of that which upward strives to huge events
  Mine be the beating of a human heart
Magnetic to the hopes and fears which leaven
The people's pains, and mingle earth with heaven."

XXXVII.

Such cry the spirit of the unborn days
  Has given to the attentive night, and now
There falls a hush: the silent starlight plays
  On her still figure, spent with speech, bowed low
In supplication to the haunting soul
  Of solitude and beauty. Far away
In their eternal round the planets roll,
  And ocean heavenward lifts his snowy spray,
But in one maiden's heart, lone in her bower,
Swells storm more fierce, burns more resistless power.

XXXVIII.

After, upon the intimate quiet swells
  A song which lightens upward-climbing feet,
A music which of blood and battle tells,
  Of lofty strife and death for country sweet,
A simple melody and stirring tale
  Given by young lips forth from a manly breast,
And now between the folded foliage pale
  The singer ends his tune on the hill-crest,
Opens the firm-barred gate with ready key
And in the Castle is hid presently.

XXXIX.

Like rain to thirsty ground, or like the cry
  Of succour to beleaguered, hapless men
That song came to Ilaria in her high
  Chamber of sorrowing grief. No longer then
Is she, alone in her wide halls, the friend
  Of song-inspiring causes : that clear voice
Touched her to rapturous hope of some good end
  To all the pain attendant on her choice,
And all her fancies lightly up and down
Go seeking for a face the voice to own.

XL.

"It cannot be the knightly Guido : he
  Recks of no thing save dicing and good cheer ;
Nor young Umberto, who has followed me
  With wooing worship all this weary year,
Nor he, nor he ;" and so she tells the sum
  Of all her people to the meanest knight,
Then wondering asks, "Whence did the music come
  Who is this unknown strange harmonious wight
Who speaks a language to the stars' pale glow
My courtiers ken not, and I only know ?"

XLI.

This wonder followed her into her sleep,
  And all night long in a deserted wood
She seemed to chase a wandering song, and leap
  O'er desperate ravine and boiling flood
Io-like stung by unexplained desire
  Banishing her from sleep and homelike things,
Following through sweeping water and fierce fire
  A sound, a shape, a fleeting thing with wings,
And when the ruby dawn broke silently
She sighed for care and vexing mystery :

XLII.

And all the morrow she interrogates
  Vainly the empty faces of her friends,
Nor finds in one that which her longing sates,
  The heavenly light which heavenly longing lends;
Yet in the evening when she stept alone
  Under the azure awning of the heaven,
Rejoicing that again the feast was done
  And to her tired mind sweetest solace given,
Beside the myrtles as she paced along
She heard once more anear, the song, the song;

XLIII.

And stepping lightly through the trees, as one
  Who moves to meet glad joy or death's chill doom,
(The moon upon the quiet garden shone
  And clothed in light the grass, the flowers' bloom)
Startled, amazed she found the shape well known
  Of the most humble servant of her hall,
A lad who in her cottages had grown
  And did low service for the seneschal,
Whom she had smiled on, spoke to, times enow
Liking his active build and open brow.

XLIV.

I may not tell, I scarce can fathom quite
  The pain she felt. Indeed it must be owned
Out of her friendless dreams and lonesome plight
  Some eager hope that unknown voice had crowned,
Some vision of full sympathy beloved,
  Of common yearnings, ay, perchance of more,
Since souls by mutual aim together moved
  So often catch young Cupid at the door,
That wily lurking boy who finds a part
Even in the plottings of the highest heart:

XLV.

But all that chance is done with: she must go
  Back to the chatelaine, and lose her fond
World-altering hope. She feels the icy flow
  Of agony flood up within. "Despond,
Die in the silence, O poor self!" she cries,
  And straightway speaks out of her courtesy
Some common word of joy for cloudless skies
  To Caspar, who makes reverent reply—
"The heaven, my queen, to souls which have no care
Is cloudless: else, one infinite despair."

XLVI.

Strange answer! She—"And of despair, my child,
  How do you speak, who have had peace alone?"
And he—"Ah, how to say it shall I dare,
  Yet smiling eyes screen often souls that moan,
And loving slaves are watchers keen, and I
  Have something guessed that made my whole soul
    ache."
"You mean that on me weighs some misery?"
  "Forgive me, lady, since for your dear sake
Death would I face; condone my speech too bold"—
Her tears came fast, and true the trouble told.

XLVII.

Sweet easing way, confession! And she found
  A joy to speak her pain in Caspar's ear
As one might whisper secrets to the ground;
  And if she had a longing or a fear,
An aim, a passion, or a will to do,
  In this low drudge a twin desire burned strong;
Whatever stirred her deeply moved him too
  Like instruments accordant to a song;
And soon she found that whence she could not tell
He had won thoughts which matched her studies well.

XLVIII.

And a veiled nobleness in the whole man
  Grew on her, and the menial died away;
'Twas joy to find him in the morning wan
  Tending the flowers in her garden gay,
And touch with some light word to melody
  The strings of his lone thinkings, and respond
With stately condescending sympathy
  To the deep chords resultant. And a bond
Of common love and hate, gentle and rare,
Linked the poor Lombard to the lady fair.

XLIX.

Now, gentle maidens and good brothers all
  Who read this legend, you are sure to say
While the slow smiles round your lip-corners crawl,
  'Tis time this verse grows silent. Clear as day
Shines the conclusion, when the lady sad
  Must wed her gardener, since her taste so bends,
And, fed by false romance, she is so mad
  As to detest her high-born courteous friends,
Ring out the bells, the wedding-scene discover,
And give the lady to her low-born lover.

L.

Yet—not too fast—for slowly to its close
  Advanced the day of great Ilaria's choice :
A year is gone by since to lily and rose
  Her pain she told, and heard the ringing voice
Of Caspar winnowing the night of fear,
  And she has oft resolved and paused once more,
And sore has been the struggle to uptear
  The weed of pride out of her being's core
And free her proper soul from the dead coil
Of ingrown old-world roots which mar its soil.

LI.

Yet clearness came at last, and with it joy,
  And ever more to her her friend became,
And a pure spring of love without alloy
  Inspired her purpose and dispelled her shame ;
And all of best and brightest in her twined
  About his truth and loyalty supreme :
Dawn broke more welcome to her happy mind,
  Lovelier smiled the eve, the hour of dream,
Field, fell, and forest donned a fairer dress
To crown her passion's hallowed inwardness :

LII.

And unto him who silently had sighed
  She pledged her troth, and they together vowed
Devotion true and faith intensified
  Unto the ideal aim to which each bowed,
And all her wealth, which by a myriad bars
  Was tied from worthy use, she would forsake,
And with him flee and mingle in the wars
  Where the unborn days' fortune was at stake,
Would join some civic brotherhood, and swell
The bands for the world's hope who fought and fell.

LIII.

Look up, O flowers, and bless the light of day,
  O noble river, gladly fare along,
Merrily, ye blithe birds, merrily play,
  Happily to your close sweep, O my song,
For birth has stepped down from a throne of pride
  Into the valley where the blossoms spring,
And there for evermore she will abide,
  And tend each bud, and help each ailing thing,
With infinite beatitude of smile
Will heal all hurts and every pain beguile;

LIV.

And there will spring a garden in the low
  Lush meads where once was swamp and reedy
    waste,
There every delicate growth and bloom will blow,
  Roses so rich and rare, and lilies chaste,
And violets with their musings still and deep,
  And marigolds and march-tide daffodils,
And million daisies in the grasses peep,
  And million cowslips cluster by the rills,
And from immortal trees the birds will pour
With bursting throats bliss, bliss for evermore.

LV.

In secret they were wed; in secret planned
  Their flight. That region's ancient city-queen,
Long slave to kings, at length saw hope at hand
  And chance of glad war where sad peace had been;
They would be plotters in that enterprise,
  And mingle with the high-tuned soldier band
Who daily looked at death with dauntless eyes
  Hoping to win some glory for the land,
For one brief hour with love and their great cause
They would live large, though fate be at their doors.

LVI.

By night they fled : dark was the stair : they passed
  The corridor so hushed and solitary
Upon whose polished floor no lamp was glassed :
  The black-roofed hall they won with footsteps wary,
And ere the zenith of the night were gone
  Forth from her home's old portal, and together
Upon the ghostly terrace stood alone,
  Free from the past's chill bond and their birth's tether,
"Free" was the word they breathed as their lips closed,
Free from all chains by buried use imposed.

LVII.

Amid the farewell-whispering trees they went
  Into the valley ; and she needs must shed
A tear for memory's sake, although so bent
  To glorify the purpose she had wed :
Godward behind them in the moon upsprung
  Her towers, and low and gloomy lay the plain,
But hallowed hopes about her footsteps hung
  Leading her on, and eased her passing pain ;
And to the river's marge before the day
They came, and loosed a barge, and passed away

LVIII.

Into the undistinguished crowd, whose pain
  Is their elected pleasure: they, whose tears
Water the seeds of hope like pleasant rain
  Against the harvest of undreamed-of years;
Adown the welling flood of Time they go
  And Love goes with them: He will ever be
Their guiding voice and tell them what to do,
  Nor do I dream that toil or misery
Can dull at any time their passion high,
Or lull them into rest, while He is by;—

LIX.

He, for whose sake a home of ease she left,
  And, while youth still was tender and joy dear,
Chose to be of all meaner bliss bereft
  So she might be his servant: selfish fear,
Pride, sloth, sin's cankering crowd could not avail
  To stay her, when His look upon her fell,
Straight she uprose and went, she could not fail
  To go, obedient to His smile's high spell,
With willing step and proudly smiling eye
To help the hearts of the world's chivalry.

DAPHNIS.

THIS is a tale of simple Sicily
And Daphnis, a Sicilian shepherd-boy:
Reader, steal wings from fancy, and with me
Fly back to seasons long before the whirl
Of stirring cities shut the timid gods
Aloof from men, and made a need for shrines;
When all the earth more vocal seemed than now
Our loveliest scenes, with heavenly presences;
Thither away, and may some Muse more kind
Than her proud sisters speed one laden bee
With honey from Hymettus to these lips,
And O that through the hurry of the street
And clogging smoke and teen and toil may fall
A whisper of the woods of the dead earth
Upon my cheek, and I may something catch
Of the lost spirit of old pastorals
To animate with store of sweetness mined
Out of men's graves, whose living hearts were harps
Resonant with forgotten chords, my song.

It is not told what was the embassage
Which led the message-bearer of the gods
To Sicily, where loitering he found
Dipping white feet into a slipping brook
A Naiad, lilywise slender and white,
By him before he went a mother made
In her old virgin valley. Hermes there
Tarrying among the incomparable flowers
And straying through the umbrage of dark woods,
With laurel, pine, cypress and cedar dim,
He and his Naiad wife and smiling child—
Bright-limbed and dazzling triad, in the shade
Of far-receding forest-gaps who seemed
By their own light of limb and hair to shine—
Forgot himself the fleetest foot that sprung
Down from Olympus at the hest of Zeus,
Cleaving the clouds and buffeting the storms,
Earthward with lightning impact to convey
Joy, woe, heaven's chequered portioning, to men ;
Forgot the nectar and young Hebe's smile,
The talk of gods, the even temper fine
And plenitude of holy unbroken days ;
And longed no more to fare to cities bright
On wings whose every beating was a bliss,
Cities built lofty with fair towers and gates
O'erbreasting wide champaign or watery wild,

And grew to be in wish and thought no higher
Than an earth-god, Oread or Hamydriad—
Albeit he knew the warmth of Venus' kiss
And oft had earned to be Zeus' counsellor—
Yet fell from Hermes almost to a man
For love of a wan Naiad with white hair.
  But sent with summons undeniable
Iris at last back from sweet Sicily
Recalled him to the face of angry Zeus;
And she dwelt sorrowful in a lone dell,
Where still in shrubs o'erclambering a fount
Is heard a sound of sobs and dropping tears.
There she nursed Daphnis. Simple was their home,
Yet elegant with natural growths of briar
And climbing trellis-work of southern flowers,
Whose breath was odorous. A falling rock
Had dammed into a pool a thread of stream
In a cleft valley, and around sprung high
Whatever is sweetest of Sicilian growth,
Both shrub and tree, and underneath a world
Of painted flowers and luscious grasses sucked
Life from the drops: anear upon the sward
Against one wall of the hill-side were trained
Creepers, which interweaving with low boughs
Made a thick roof, strong against wind and rain;
And underneath were seats of mossy stone

And, handiwork of a rude satyr-servant,
Platters for fruit and wooden jars for wine,
And if a Naiad dwelling with her child
Needed for tendance more of carved or wrought
Or from a distance carried, such were there.
  A fair home! For above them to the sky
Rose Etna, grandly tranquil. Never then
Did angry lava strip the dells of green,
But like a giant set to screen the isle
From hostile sea-sent blasts the mountain watched
Solemnly beautiful; and underneath
Lay folded valleys between billowy hills,
And every valley was a wonder rich
With old-world shapely growths and greeneries.
  There, like a sapling planted by a stream
In a good land where bleak storms never come,
Or like a young thrush sheltered in a nest
Under its mother's warm, quick-pulsing heart
Grew Daphnis. Few his needs and small his cares,
Sweet all his thoughts and happy all his hours;
Little to the good human folk came he
But with his mother strayed anigh their stream,
Or took his staff and wandered forth alone
Into the shadows of the woods: for there,
Loving his loveliness, old Pan would come
And teach him to bring music from a flute

In which the murmurs of the forest-world
Found voice with added sweetness. Hours and hours
Daphnis would pore upon his lay, and call
All birds of melody around the place
To marvel at his piping. Far and near
He strayed o'er Sicily his boyhood through
To rob the storied land of honeyed thoughts
Which to the woods he gave in fluting.
So,
Passed seventeen years like a light dream, and now
How rich, how liquid the May eve, and he
In beauty and in stature grown, with pose
Olympian, slender frame but delicate-strong,
Fresher than flowers, whiter than the foam,
Stands on a crag, resplendent in the light,
Which from the kiss of the cheeks of ridges twain
Broadens and falls to the marge of a bright sea.
Greens of the south, arbutus, olive and pine,
Mystic or burnished bright the place adorn
Alternate with crude rock, ivied or bare:
Flowers of the south, lilies and hyacinths,
Uplift heads peerless from the dewy sward.
Careless he waits, for now his flocks are penned,
And done his light day-task of shepherding
The woolly wealth of a near-dwelling prince.
Ocean, your spirit, like Time's, altho' so stern,

Cruel, untrustworthy, angry and wild,
Has tender moments: you can speak soothing things:
Hearing your intermittent murmur strange
On such a shore as this, at such an hour,
A harassed ear might unhoped solace find;
How much more, as you tell to valley and hill
Impressively, with a grand voice hushed low,
Mysteries of coral caverns, waving weeds,
Palaces of Naiads, pearly halls and gates
Swung by no breeze, and all the blossoms lift
Their heads alert to listen, and myrtles sigh;
How much more Daphnis felt an unwonted fire
Flush in his features moistening his eyes,
And breath come quicker. Magic of the hour!
His past was but a shadow, and his future,
A dream before, golden and glorious hope,
Transfixed he stared, and his strong boyhood grew
A thing inspired and radiantly fair.
Anon the wind fell, Ocean's voice stilled down,
Hesper shot out into the waiting night,
A mystery and a charm were in the place,
And bodings of new comings. Still he stood
As one to whom in old or modern day
A vision of the ancient gods has come
In lonely places at the fall of night,
Either a faun or satyr, or the sheen

Of snowy-breasted Naiad, fleet and shy,
Or Dian hasting homeward from the hunt,
Glad flush of all-day action on her cheek,
And in her eyes pure unapproachable fire,
The holiness and gladness of the world;—
Moveless he looks, pillared upon the spot,
Tremulous, awed, and all his life will tell
His vision and the favour of the gods,
And love, beyond all earthly homes, this glade;—
So Daphnis stood, on whom that hour had come
The sense of the large wealthiness of life,
An unwonted whisper of new deeds to do,
And outlook from the quiet fold of home.
  For hitherto unruffled as a lake
Locked in the precincts of a stormless vale
His days had been, or like a violet
Shedding its sweetness from a secret bank
Amorously on inclement February air,
Hopeless to feel ever about its stalk
The fingers meet, plucking it, of a maid,
Or sleep with full fruition its last sleep
On her glad bosom. But the time was come
When the sweet blossom of his shepherd-heart
Must sway in the unwonted storms of love;
Never more as this evening, free and bright,
Shall he the sea-shore seek, virgin of care,

Nor whistling cheerier than the lark at dawn
Lead out to pasture his thick-huddling sheep.
For now the day is done, the stars come out,
Darkness upon the palms, the myrtles falls,
The waves with a more solemn murmur break
Along the saddened coast, and dim and cold
Into the blackness ocean stretches away,
And still the boy waits, dreamy, awed and faint.
  Who is this, mocking the star-lit surf
With whiteness, she who like a moonbeam broke
Out of the dusk woods, and now skirts the beach
Hastily, seeking perchance a comrade lost?
Whose step is airier than a gazelle's,
As, bending forward to listen, she hurries by,
And now she leans against a rugged stone
Doubtful, with head upon her hand reclined,
And elbow planted on the senseless rock;
Golden hair softly downwards tumbling beneath
Exquisite rounded breasts to where a zone
Prisons, around the lily slenderness
Of her shapely waist, a careless-ordered robe.
Her crystal forehead, set upon her palm,
Is but half veiled, and all the subdued light
Of marvellous downcast eyes, with arching brows,
Cheeks creamwhite, chaste lips, flowerlike neck, and
    breast

Which man or god out of the universe
Might well elect to be his heart's one home,
All these, and joined to these the nameless charm
Which beauty has for the trembling eye of youth,
Which like a mist into enchantment melts
Each separate pillar of the palace of love,
Unconsciously to Daphnis are displayed,—
Daphnis, the beautiful shepherd, pure of soul.
Springing towards her down the shingly shore,
"What seek you, lady?" cries he wonderingly,
With arms outstretched as if in prayer. "I know
Each lurking pathway and each hidden pass
Of all these woods; here with my mother, a nymph,
I since the earliest whisper of young thought
Have lived, and every valley and every hill
Know well. If then you seek a wandering lamb,
Or some strayed nymph, O not so fair as you,
Yet as your comrade worthy of such help
And earnest service as a man can tend,
Command me, I am gone, joyous at heart
To be obeying your first light behest,
Though grieved to quit you, vision of surprise!"
And she, whom terror at his leap, his look,
His sudden coming and his eager word,
To growing trustfulness soon yielded ground;
"I seek my sister, she seeks a lost friend;

Nymphs are we, in a cavern near the sea
Who dwell, a happy company : my name
Is Lyce. If indeed you are so kind,
And, as you say, these strange green thickets know,
Start we together to seek the errant pair."
So hand in hand, childlike, into the dark
They pass, into the land of golden dreams,
Of trembling hands, of winning hopes, of feet
Hasting along the flowery thornless way ;
With heaving bosoms and with halting words,
With promisings and claspings of the hands,
With wooing whispers and with happy tears
Into the love-land of the early world
They pass, the land where nights were cloudless-fair
And mornings amber-gleaming ; where the sun
Smote never too hot on basking mid-day's face,
And lingering evening-winds ambrosial
Sighed over sweet glades under burning stars,
Where Nature trained a manifold marriage-quire
To chant the hymeneals of young love,—
Nightingales ravishing the ear of night
With ecstacy of throbbing throats, the low
Undertone of the tree-tops zephyr-twanged,
The treble of the trickling brooks, the bass
Of breaking torrents in chasms afar away ;—
They go, let us not follow, nor profane

The sanctity of these blessed childrens' heaven.
  Henceforth in the sweet weather our twain fed
Their hearts with happiness. Never a morn
Reddened old Etna, but he led betimes
His flock anear the shore, and she tripped up
With cheek whose flush was tender as the pink
Lining of a sea-shell, from her cold home
To kiss away slumber's last heaviness
From his young eyes, and follow with him the sheep
Dropping down mazy paths from dizzy crags
To valley pastures, where they loitered long,
And made light meals of berries, fruit and milk
Fetched in his bottle. Then they would rise and climb
With lingering pace and interwoven arms
To higher land, looking on the still sea
Lucent under their feet, and murmuring
Like a strong giant in a gorgeous dream.
Then graver would he be after their talk
And laughter and sweet kisses, and he would lean
His head upon her knee, and while she twined
Tenderly through his hair her fingers, sing
Sweet melodies, bucolic tales, of her
Whose voice went terrible through Enna's vale
Bewailing a lost daughter, stolen away
To be a queen in the dim place of death,
Where there is neither sun, nor song, nor joy.

Or he would take his flute, and play the tunes
Pan taught him in his childhood, that wild Pan
Whom, his loose stories and goat's legs despite,
He loved. And once, after their gladdest day,
He piping so and resting on her knee,
She craved in playful earnest, " Daphnis, swear
Never to love another, or leave me;
Ever to be ice-cold to all but me,
The essence of whose being all is yours:
Tender indeed, yielding and clinging am I,
So that your little finger easily
Could bend me to fulfil your uttermost wish,
In all but that I should pardon to behold
Your eyes look love in any but my eyes;
But then, by ocean's anger, I would be
Like a lashed breaker, awful, ruinous,
And these same eyes which are my poor life's light
Relentlessly, by heaven I swear, would blind "—
And, seeing in her sparkling look, and gesture
Of sudden passion, a beauty new-revealed,
He kissed her lips a hundred times and swore.
  Together on the height they rest, a thing
Most dear to dream of: high in the clear air,
The limpid air Sicilian, with large eyes
In absolute sunshine joying in the long
Interchange of delighted looks, and lips

Just parted to drink in the nectarous air;
High o'er the common plain where life is brisk,
High o'er the busy washing of the sea,
Remote in clearest clime from all save love,
Love and pure light of day and ambient air
And conscious satisfaction of the soul;
In sacred exile from disturbing thought,
Harrowing expectation, tiring toil,
Hope disappointed and impatient fear;
Hidden away in happy peace from all
The care that needs must follow in the world
When they are gone, with not a cloud to blot
Their vision, nor one troublesome wind to blow;
Lapped in Elysian dreamland by no guess
Broken of aught which to their pleasure lacked,
They rest there; and a tender film of tears
May wet their lashes with o'erflowing joy,
A passing pain for day too early done
Make bliss more sweet by contrast: that is all:
The rapturous beating music of their hearts
Owns no profounder minor, but flows on
Like rivulets down the dells of Paradise
In ever-welling ecstasy secure.

Shine from your past, sweet luminaries! burst
The heavy clouds and break upon our day!
Be for the hurry and the heat of life

A balm of memory; bid us believe
There lurks a heart of holiness beneath
Our oppressed bosoms and our furrowed brows;
Image to us, lest we at any time
Sink in the heat and die beneath our load,
The fair calm fashion of the future world,
And in your spotless innocency steep
The purity and passion of our prayers!
  But peace, and let us, skyward gazing, mark
The faint cloud of my story float along
To where it breaks in a light rain of tears.
  A wanderer I ween on Etna's ridge,
Turning his face towards the closing day,
Might still see, climbing up the shadowed rise,
From ledge to ledge, behind a flock of sheep,
Daphnis and Lyce, Daphnis with his crook
And flute hung on his girdle, and the girl
One hand upon his shoulder, and the other
Brushing the gold out of her eyes, and turning
To watch the last light. Dusky the vale grows,
Shadowy the sheep, and visionary-pale
The lingering figures, and the sheep-bells ring
Like airy spirit-calls from rock to rock,
Enchanting music; and the dreamer starts,—
Was it indeed a dream? Is Daphnis dead,
And his sweet pipings which made Dian mad,

And all the shepherd-life of Sicily?
Yes, he is gone, and she who loved him true,
Both, like the silly sheep, are gone and dead,
Only their spirits haunt these solitudes
For evermore; amorously intertwined,
He with this, she with that hand, part the boughs,
Emerging on some open glade, and wake
With warbling poetry the queen of night
To rivalry from a thick shed of green:
Or he will take his flute and, sitting down,
Pipe a sad ditty all of love and loss,
And fading flower and winter's kingdom hoar,
And broken faith and vain repentance. She
At this will snatch away the toy, and print
Eager forgiveness on his coral lip,
Girdling his neck with ever-youthful arms,
Then they will rise and pass with dreamy feet
Into the purple haze, but for long hours
Their bird will chant a voluntary
To spiral tree and solemn-beetling crag,
And, summoned by her trilling, the horned moon
Will peep over the marge of the ravine
And wash the woods with silver.

Praise to heaven
That granted immortality of joy
To their long day of happy constancy.

For through ten tranquil years they fed their sheep
And stored their hearts with comfort. Day by day
Their greetings, like the kiss of sun and sea,
Kept a fine primal gladness; and as flowers
Tire not to sip the dews at night, or trees
To nod their dreaming heads in saddened winds,
So to these twain the interchange of souls
Was a long wedding-day, and steadfastness
In either spirit held the helm of love,
So that the shepherds and the shepherdesses,
Like children winding flowers, together weaved
Their names strong-linked in many a wreath of song
At festivals and rustic ceremonies.
Among these when a hoary Priest would stand
Sacrificing, and the reverent people pressed
In circle round the altar, prayerful souls,
Daphnis and Lyce from the height would come,
Their brows with more than human light adorned.
And folk would wonder open-eyed, and say,
"Look, still more lovely!" "Venus! what a smile!
Immortal grace and faith undying!" So,
Their worship done, the pair would be the joy
Of the dance, or he would music make for them
Which slew all dancing. Leaned upon the sward
Around them under the mild eye of eve
Pleasure-weary listened maid and man, and still

Each eye dwelt on the vision of their youth
And splendid beauty.
So the time went by,
Busy with love and shepherding, and kind
Intercourse with the simple mortal folk
Whose praises spread the name of them abroad
Through every dell and township of the isle,
And their love was a sound from shore to shore,
Etna to Eryx.
Stood a white-walled town
Upon the Southern coast, where ruled a king
Who lately from the Asian coast had led
Ionian colonists to Sicily,
And in his ship the treasure of the tribe,
A white princess, his daughter. Unto her,
Indolent in a curtained chamber, came
The tale of Daphnis, and the name alone
Became a wonder in her heart, but when,
Searching the pastures with her maids, she found
Him piping to his sheep, the hidden spark
Leaped in her soul to flame. Swift came the close:
Heaven willed that clouds should settle o'er the term
Of their long joy. The human beauty warm
And majesty of the lady caught his love,
And, like a mist, he faded from the fields.
But Lyce, prone in misery in her cave,

Wept not nor moved a season; then in rage
Arose, and flung her woe into the ear
Of ocean; he moaned fearfully, and swore
Deep oaths of wrath and hate; and afterwards,
When Daphnis with his lofty paramour
Trod the sea-beach, there rose out of the wave,
Sudden, impalpable, an armed Power,
And smote the sight out of his faithless eyes
  But Hermes on Olympus heard the wail
Of blinded Daphnis, and within an hour
Out of the doomed walls led his son to tread
Once more the pasture-lands of his first faith,
And feel upon his paining brow the touch
Of earthly winds with earthly memories stored:
Then in his arms he bore him to the sky
To lead a new life with the mighty gods;
And on the face of night was set a star
To be an emblem of him to all time;
And on me, as I close my tale, that star
Looks through the lattice, pure and perfect light,
Speaking I know not what of deep and strange
From the sublime infinity of heaven.

EPILOGUE.

In youth, in love, each day, indeed each hour
Is an eternity. What is old age,
Hoar head and tottering footstep, to the man
Who once, long since, in summers laid away,
Like roses dead with all their sweetness lost,
Under the damp and wormy sod of time,
Proud in bright youth and eager strength has seen
His passion mirrored small in nearing eyes
And taken virgin honey from young lips?—
What are the stars, all noble palaces,
Pictures and statutes, legends and old lays,
The pomp of life, but setting poor enough
For splendid feeling and for noble deed,
Aspiring youth attaining after strife
The crown and summit of its heart's desire?
And that fool death, who thinks to steal the bliss
Out of all tender and divine delights
With his crude mask of skull and cross-bones grim,
How bitterly is he, the foe, bemocked

When, with an omen of decay to be,
He dyes the hair and cheek of loveliness
With a more heart-possessing mystic hue,
And makes each word we speak in healthy days,
Each grace and look of people whom we love
A thousandfold more satisfying-sweet:
High race of men, priestlike, immortal, brave,
For you this mocking death no fear should be;
Your doings and your sayings on the ear
Of listening eternities swell on,
A hymn which no void distances can quell,
Silences bury. Every land and age
To this victorious human chant some notes
In cadence full or tender-stealing lends,
The mightiest trumpetings are storied deeds
And the subtlest music is the voice of love.
  And not alone in ancient Sicily
This note rang clear. Idyllic whispers rise
Through our towns' smoke, and find the kindly stars
As sympathetic as in days gone by.
The shop-boy, freed at nightfall from his work,
Walking with Mary through the crowded street,
Envies not any of the blessed dead
Whose large loves are the food of modern rime,
But hugs her close, and thanks the kindly powers
For present blessings. Fresh from school come home,

Bringing the aroma of the fields
Into a stately mansion, many a boy,
Heart-struck by Eros in a dance, is made
Man. All around us in the world are played
Pieces with power and with passion rich;
Only dull moles believe the universe
Is built four-square upon a base of prose,
And lorded over by King Common-sense,
That false king regnant over knaves and fools;
Only the strong respectabilities
Have made a league of horror and of woe
To sell their children to the idol wealth,
Whom sleek priests on the altar have set up,
And in his honour yearly bring to slay
With pompous equipage and rite profaned
Hecatombs of despairing children's hearts;—
Hence come the hideous sorrows, the salt tears
Which desecrate our time, the joyless home,
Weak offspring of a loveless marriage-bed,
The shriek of laughter in the Haymarket
At twelve o'clock on God's blest mid-spring night,
And blighted lives, and blasted deaths, and hate
Stalking at noonday down the sunny Park,
Riding postilion before carriage gay;—
Ah! bane of narrow rule and selfish pride,
How have they marred the crown of a great age;

Ideal as in Eden might life be,
For all our comforts and our chilly skies,
Could we but with a childlike confidence
Trust ourselves to dear Nature's guiding hand
And the pure instincts of unsullied youth :
Then were no need to tell the simple loves
Of Daphnis and a maiden, and convince
The barren understanding of the time
How holy-simple love's young vow should be ;
Then, were dull mammon everywhere dethroned,
And true love owned an angel of the light,
How large a barrier were heaved away
Which blocks man's passage to the golden age,—
Those halcyon days which, sent upon the earth
Thousands of years before the appointed time
Might touch the tree-tops with a mystic awe,
And dove-like fall upon all heads, and tears
Would be no more, nor terrors any more,
No gilded shams, no shameful secrecies,
But light of wisdom sober, light of hope
Gleaming supernal, and in every soul
The spring of youth touched with triumphal calm,—
Times such as will be, unimaginably
More eloquent, more vocal, more sublime
Than the brief day of Daphnis and his bride.

CEPHALUS AND AURORA.

DARK were the woods and brightly the stars shone
  When Cephalus led forth his eager hounds,
Away in the deep night-time are they gone,
  Hunter and pack, while glade and brake resounds;
Through bosky thicket and up open steep
  Under the horned moon's beaconing they fare
To win a high crag which the forests deep
  Girdle round, dreaming in the limpid air,
There, poised against a branch, the youth must stay
To wait the advent of the helpful day.

O throbbing stars, O happy moon, O trees,
  O eager boy, expectant hounds, sublime
Pure moments, ere the fond enchantment flees
  Pause for us on the horizon of old Time;
And, Cephalus, rest your bright-cinctured head
  On this hand, and with that the leash restrain,
And on them all let softest sheen be shed
  That they may sink like song into the brain,
Ere yet is felt the rustling garb of day,
Or blank fact snatch the whole charmed group away.

And you, O wooing wind, pass o'er the heads
  Of the deep-mantled veterans of the vale,
And kiss the gentle flowers upon their beds
  On the hill-steep; return and with low wail
Say farewell to the South, and with long finger
  Touch the faint cheeks of East and Western skies
Tarrying far off; then sighing come and linger
  Once more over the forest:—so arise
Gathering your strength and sweetness amorous
To kiss the white feet of still Cephalus.

But ere that long long kiss was fully ended
  In the pale East a quiver and a stir
Was felt, and from its dusk doors a form wended
  (Light breezes on their wings escorting her),
Over the whispering wondering tree-tops moved
  With peering eyes, stretched hands, and smile untold,
And fell upon the neck of him she loved,
  Her amber locks melting into his gold;—
O Cephalus, in vain before the sun
Did you arise to hunt; your sport is done.

For soon Aurora bids her gladsome train
  Speed from the breezy portals of the dawn:
At her bright finger's beck they post amain
  With jocund shout, and dance, and piping horn;
Before the lovers on the dewy green
  They dance a lightsome measure, drunk with glee,
Also the flowers must dance before their queen,
  And westward far the salt waves of the sea
Dance in the morning, dance for frolic and joy
Because Aurora weds her hunter boy.

High nuptials those, the proud immaculate dawn
  Wedding bright eager youth in the earth's prime!
Glad union! and the offspring that was born
  Of their chaste bliss lives still in our cold time;
Still lives a scion of the world antique,
  Born in her holiest and loveliest day,
Still, still your soul, imperishable Greek,
  Dowers the years and cannot pass away,
Despite the clangour of our tuneless words
You live to bless us still, you and the birds.

AMOR.

Love came into the world and looked around
  With melting eyes on all the wealth he saw;
Far-swelling meadows to his sight, the sound
  Of sleepful winds to his ear pleasure bore;
  His lips a smile of tender meaning wore,
So, ever gazing, sank he on the ground
  And the all-happy sacrifice up-bore
Of measureless content, praise without bound,
To Jove, his generous parent, throned on high
Above the rare-wrought arch of marble sky.

" Father," he cried, " for that of thy fair will
  Me thou hast set in this bright world to reign,
I thank and praise thee ; and hast deigned to fill
  All life with beauty, both the wide champaign
  Now swept with sunlight and now fed with rain,
And the low shadowy hollows of the hills,
  And the fair sweep of the unrestful main,
And all the flowers, and melody of sweet rills,—
O with full heart, good king, I joy to raise
My arms to heaven in deep and blissful praise.

" Soft comes the wind, soft on my cheek to woo,
  Slow through the light the clouds, heaven's large
    thoughts, move,
The tall trees kiss the sky, violets are blue
  Under my feet, around me fearless rove
  Beautiful deer, beneath me and above
Fair forms are wrapped in colours infinite,
  My own heart is the depthless heart of love,
And thou hast made the world glad in my sight :
Ah ! bounteous giver, to have so inwound
The soul of love with lovely works around.

"No pain is here, for pain has passed away,
  The Titans sleep beneath their craggy bed;
Could pain be rife on so serene a day?
  I know the weird woods must their honours shed,
  And the green grave must hour by hour be fed,
But I die not, I am for evermore;
  And then, how blissfully repose things dead!—
They dream upon the wide world's infinite floor,
The storms trouble them not, nor the sky's tears,
Nor the cold finger of the creeping years.

"My heart is but one flower of all this world
  Of blossoms upward looking at the sun;
My thoughts are like a stream whose flood has purled
  Quietly in a dell since time begun;
  Through hive-like towns and rustic fields I run,
And fit my darts upon the straining string,
  Strike beating hearts and watch the merry fun,
Then off with quick foot or soft-moving wing
To find new prey, or sleep on Venus' knee
Under the cool vault of a shadowy tree.

"Happy is every earthly thing that moves;
  Trees, buds, even falling leaves, are happy all:
Most happy that, or high or low, which loves
  And moves towards a kindred life. The call
  Of mating birds in May, keen to forestall
The settled summer's heat with settled joy,
  The old-world tales which never never pall
Of timorous maiden and pursuing boy—
These be true music, and on these I thrive,
Born on such immaterial food to live.

"Mine is the earth, its pleasant ways mine are,
  The secret of the haunting subtle charm
Of spring-tide copses, soul of every star
  Which earthward bends a yearning brow on warm
  Rich-scented nights, am I;—with light alarm
I speed my shafts, and all this blossoming
  Of legion-headed life pays their quick harm,
This wealth, this hope, this birth, this bliss, this spring,
This fount of being which from every pore
Of old earth sunward wells for evermore.

"At peace with nature and with my own soul!
Lie there, my bow, and let me sleep awhile,
The nightingale shall chant me her rich dole,
And I will think upon my mother's smile
And so sink off. Come, visions, to beguile
My joy-tired being, come with rustling wings
Before me in a long enchanted file,
They come! I slip into the life of things,
My boat has lost her moorings in the stream
And dreaming woodlands grow the fabric of a dream.

BERTRAM.

DEAR Bertram! child of earth! faun of the field!
  Nursling of nature, whom some fairy bore
From mystic woodland dingle unrevealed
  And laid the baby at an English door;
  And through a sacred childhood on the lore
Of leaf, and wind, and bird and brook you fed,
  And in your heart an eerie passion bore,
And from life's actual needs affrighted fled,
And your own lonely life with spring and autumn
    led;—

Whose is, in all its fitful shapes, the sky,
  Large lights which call like trumpets to the soul,
Cloud-battlements and all the revelry
  Of turbaned hosts which o'er the welkin roll;
  Whose are the blasts which break without control
On the strained roof when the wierd nights are wild
  And my lord Storm from every branch takes toll,
And all the heavy paths with leaves are piled,
And round the house the wind shrieks like a murdered
    child.

Also the hollows of the wood, where come
  No feet of nesting boys, and where alone
Silence and loveliness are still at home,—
  Loveliness seated on her mossy throne
  And Silence keeping guard,—(there enter none
Angry, or vile, or set on common things,
  But only they who all base visions shun
And the pure heart ensue, which gives them wings);
There also joy, strange joy, full oft my Bertram brings.

And hence it comes that on his very face
  The very fashion of his love is set,
That exquisite Praxitelean grace
  Fair in the Capitol; a sprite once met
  The inly-stirred earth-heart will ne'er forget;—
A face, whereon the print in subtlest guise
  Of infinite emotion lingers yet;
A brow most clearly with some wild lore wise,
Hunger for love and grace hid in those peerless eyes.

Oh, when our limbs at peep of light we fling
  Bright from our bed, and leave the sleeping town
To walk alone with a fair dawn of Spring,
  A rosy maiden clad in golden gown,
  Oh, at such hours what spirit has not known
The purity of a life at unity
  With the fresh forms which to the eye are shown,
A soul made glad as bird and clear as sky,
The awe of a divine indwelling sanctity?

Rarely on busy brains such calmness falls,
  But Bertram still has warmed his inner being
With that which never disappoints or palls;
  Ambition, envy, lust and turmoil fleeing,
  He lives in the strong charm of such high seeing;
The pearl of his white heart to Nature gave
  Who took him to her own, safe from dull dreeing
Of toil and pain which common footways pave,
Feeding him with her eyes, sweet, mystical, and grave.

London to him was a dark wilderness,
  A fearsome den, a wild and savage scene,
A hideous plague-spot, a far-sown distress
  With vulgar isles of luxury between;
  A noisy mart of traffic vile and mean,
A problem he might never solve: he trod
  The populous streets heart-sick for woodland green,
Solicitous for stillness, and the nod
Of breeze-bent bough, and the great solitudes of God.

TO ——

She sits and sighs with falling head in meads
  Whose rank growths eat the slime of sunken streams,
Oft may you see her white robe in the reeds,
  But, could you catch her face, the dream of dreams
Is there : therefore she seeks these dusky places
    Pale solitude, her only friend, to find,
    Content to sit and watch her own strange mind
  Imaging to itself old thoughts of men
Whose souls were musical, though narrow spaces
  Prisoned them from the light, as in a den.

When music from the rafters to the tombs
  Its heavenly voice through the cathedral sends,
She seeks a mouldering turret's upper rooms,
  Her face all rapt with ecstacy, and bends
Pale on the cold floor. When the lamps are out
  And all the pleasant people gone away,
    She paces through the gloom in stately wise,—
  The stars look in, the merry moonbeams play,
    The bat swoops, the clock strikes, the winds rise,—
Deep in her dreams, what recks she of their rout?

Yet doth she love, though fearfully, the heart
  Of the green summer foliage, and will steal
Not to the sunlight! but to some quaint part
  Of the still cloister, satisfied to feel
The distant passage of the happy air
    Just touch her thin locks and her bloodless hand;
  Then will she watch untired the long day through
  How the boughs wave and love their life, how blue
    The sky, the birds how dear, how rich the land,
Then creep to darkness down some hollow stair.

But O, her face! if you could see her face!
The sanctity of death, the rarity
Of nature, its most sublimated grace,
So cold and yet alluring! One would die
To dream such dreams, and be within the sweep
Of her thin robe, and see things with her sight,
And be the shadow of her shadowiness;
To probe her secret, drink her cup so deep,
Take her weird hand and slip into the night
Oblivious of the day and its hot press.

PUERILIA.

I.

HOPE stretched out a snowy finger
  Pointing: light was on his face.
But he passed, he could not linger,
  And into his place
Crept cold Terror, still denying
Comfort, answer to my sighing,
While my heart lay bleeding, dying
        For your grace.

Child! worn out with too much weeping
  For the joy that may not be,
In my spirit waking, sleeping,
  Ever full of thee
Echoes low a wordless wailing,
As, when all the West is paling,
Moans the South wind rising, failing,
        O'er the sea.

II.

Have pity! Bend your head and hear my prayer:
  Indeed the night of grief is very chill,
The hills of hope far off, and cold despair
  Makes slow my wandering feet, and mars my will.

Have pity! Take my head upon your breast
  And seal my eyes with kisses; let your cheek
Touch mine; I care not greatly for the rest;
  That were love's crown: no other do I seek.

III.

IN THE WOOD.

It was your voice that broke
  The silence of the wood, and all
The folded flowers, with faces turned
To where the ruddy sunset burned,
      Heard and awoke
O Agnes, my sweet Agnes, at your call.

Then, as you sat, the light
  Loving you, kissed you through the trees,
And, like a star, your forehead shone
With glory, fair to gaze upon,
      Until the night
Fell with a soft sigh and a murmuring breeze.

But one who watched you heard
  A mingled music, a grand symphony
Of lyre and harp unseen, that filled
That shady place, and throbbed and thrilled
      In one strong cry
Above the clouds or wing of soaring bird,

The everlasting choir
  Of nature chanting, and the voice
Of happy girlhood, bidding all
Beneath that solemn evenfall
      Rejoice, rejoice
With timbrel and with cymbal and with lyre;

Nor was that music lorn
  Of sorrow's undertone, to prove
Its perfect sweetness, and to sanctify
With the soft offering of a smothered sigh
      The spirit of love,
Which haunts the evening and sweet dreams of dawn.

But you arose and stood
  Pensive awhile, then went your way;
And I, who feared to tell my heart,
Wept only, watching you depart
      All through the wood
Towards the golden gates of setting day.

IV.

I shall not see your face again,
  Nor hear your voice, nor press your hand,
O hardest fate, O heavy pain!
  Like voices dear from a lost land
Which memory bears with doubtful wings
  To men who have found foreign homes
After long toils and wanderings,
  Agnes! even so your image comes
Ghostlike before me, night and day,
Comes, smiles, and ghostlike moves away,—
I cry your mercy but you will not stay.

A voice said to me in my dreams,
  "O bleeding heart, it ill beseems
The mourner, when the dust is thrown
  Into the grave, and night has come,
To linger there, to weep, to moan
  For the cold life which was his home;
Arise, begone! the night is wild,
Arise, take cheer, be reconciled."

"I cannot rise: strive not to break
  The chains which link the quick and dead:
The world is hard, and I am weak,
  And look, my head is near her head;
Give smiles, give laughter to the brave,
  And joy to them who have no fears,
Lay cypress sadly on the grave,
  And leave the mourner to his tears."

OFTEN when the benign moon with her beams
  The face of night with tremulous beauty takes,
Touched through the tangled veil of midnight dreams
  My heart unto itself low music makes.

Dawn comes, but whence the unwonted peace of mind
  Supplanting morn's too common meed of care,
Quiet and joy, a temper all resigned,
  Indwelling where fierce pangs too often are?

Son! on your mother's breast last night you lay,
  Nature bent over you, wondering and mild,
Breathed on you, kissed you softly, and to-day
  Your flesh returns as that of a young child.

Not without pangs has she beheld you grow
  To works and thoughts and woes beyond her ken,
Not without yearning did she see you go
  To mix in the unrestful life of men.

And though you scorn, neglect her, yet when most
  Baffled in strife, belated in the race,
With hot ambition fevered, tempest-tost—
  'Tis all her love can do—she turns a face

Upon your inward soul, fair still and full
  Of a strong patient peace which salves all sores,
In hushed communion, deep and wonderful,
  Imparting her heart's inner peace to yours ;

In hours of rest, in lonely lovely places,
  In the woods' voices or the speech of streams,
In tender memories, in chastened faces,
  Or, as last night, in the deep vale of dreams.

O BLEAK and chill o'er plain and vale and mountain-slope
The east wind goes:
The trees stand joyless, skies are cheerless, without hope,
Deep, deep the snows:
The sheep are crowded by the hedge; no living thing
Moves anywhere:
Folded away sleeps hope with buried seeds till Spring
Bid her rise fair.

O, draw the curtain, love, shut out the waste of wold
So dim, so drear;
Come to the fire and let me hold that head of gold
As near as dear;
And let the snows heap o'er our roof a silent grave,
So we may prove
Safe from the cold which bites, the winds which rave,
One hour of love

THE SIBYL.

SHE stept before the careless, haughty king,
  A messenger out of the mystic skies,
Crying, "O sire, a boon from Jove I bring,
  Sparely he spends who dear such treasure buys;
Bring forth your hoarded heaps of jewels and gold
  To buy heaven's wares and blessings for the state."
With that before his eyes she doth unfold
  Nine giant volumes, big with fear and fate.

What meant the woman with her earnest look?
  How dared she on his loneliness intrude
With jest defiant? Yet his spirit shook
  Seeing her, like a boy's who breaks with rude
Unseemly laugh into a garth of graves
  At evening, and falls still with transient awe,
But like a king his better heart he braves
  And warns the rash invader to the door.

His urgent threat lightly she disregards
  Standing self-trustful though in presence so stern
With forehead knit and sad. "The king discards
  Jove's bounty, then the king shall see it burn."
And taller doth she wax with gathering ire
  And in her great eyes do the lightnings play
As three huge tomes she casts into the fire
  And the quick flame licks lightly up its prey.

Like as on sunny morning hours men chase
  The memory of some harrowing sound or sight
Which, still recurring, haunts them; such the case
  Of this proud king who, half in fear to light
On some large portent all significant,
  Dreads more and loathes to fail from majesty,
Quenching before a shameless mendicant
  The unbrooked fire of his all-ruling eye.

The Sibyl once again draws close and tends
  The unburnt volumes with a joyless smile
Before the king, who curious forward bends
  And watches,—witchcraft does she mean or guile?
Yet something in her look holds him aghast,
  Recalling all he recollects of wild
Terrible and divine,—the shivering blast
  And toppling waves o'er sinking ships up-piled.

No suppliant now, the mighty books she proffers,
  Demanding the same price with awful brow
And hand outstretched (so the strong conqueror offers
  Slavery or death to captives quivering low):
The little fire crackled in the furnace-pan
  But in the chamber stirred no other thing,
Still as the sculpture of some cunning man
  Stood the wrought Sibyl and the wavering king.

But what too poorly could a chisel show
  Was what the high gods did intently mark;
The battle waged with many a wounding blow
  In the king's soul, who stood there chill and stark;
God-given reverence, kindred with things divine,
  At war with human pride and human state,
The field a soul, the issue his own line,
  And high Rome's destiny and the world's fate.

Shall heavenly will in dark enigma speak,
  And hold it sin if such is misconstrued?
Is a high monarch through the veil to break
  By heaven thrown round him for his people's good
At warning vague, thus scornfully conveyed,
  So strange in form, of such wild parentage?
He questioned mute, and she his face surveyed
  Stationary, quelling down pity and rage.

Have I not duly at hours and seasons meet,
  With proper pride of pomp and torch and chant
And costly robe and retinue, to the feet
  Of each white statue largely without scant
First-fruits and offerings of flesh and flower brought?
  To what end then was this waste, this solemn rout,
If heaven, my pious service counting naught,
  A throne divine with mocking farce should flout?

Have not my litanies and sacrifices
  Laid up against some half-unwitting error
A store of pardon above? Her look entices
  My heart to yield, with its strange gaze of terror,
But is a king whose whisper is the law
  To brook defiance and an air so bold?—
And then, whence dreamed I that her mien breathed
    awe?
  She is a beggar, and her hope is gold.

So, self-convinced against his higher self,
  Spurred by o'er-confidence and smarting pride,
Against all doubts he hates the wight whom pelf
  Has taught to claim a mission from heaven, and
    hide

Under the antic garb of prophet-gaze
  Irreverence for himself, his office grand ;—
A wretch who, be her daring crime or craze,
  Shall find there rules a monarch in the land.

Enough for her that visage changed, where doubt
  Has fled before decision's flag unfurled ;—
The die is cast, and with a ringing shout
  Into the fire three volumes more are hurled ;
Out of her frozen reserve at once she springs,
  And, pointing at the once more quailing man,
Opens her lips to speak prophetic things
  With deep breaths passionate ; and thus began.

" Have I not read, writ in your pensive eyes,
  Throughout these solemn moments of suspense,
The shiftings and unworthy sophistries
  Which overcame at last the instinctive sense
By which you knew, by Jove's own finger traced,
  The emblem of my mission on my brow,
Yet with false dignity your spirit braced,
  Angry because I spake less bold than now ?

" Yet now at last you know me, and now I
  Must speak, and all your evil pride break down ;
Sent with a blessing from the fateful sky,
  At least in this will I befriend Rome's town,

That you no more from hungry suppliant
  Bending before your doors shall turn away,
Wrapped in yourself, as from Jove's ministrant
  Upon this age-to-be-remembered day.

"Behold, you stand convicted at this word,
  No doubt authentic in your heart had place,
You knew me by the deep voice that you heard,
  You knew me by the anger of my face:
Plain reads the indictment; Jove an order sent,
  You knew that from that high king it was come,
But to weak pride your worthless heart you lent,
  And a large blessing lost, and ruined Rome.

"And shall not Jove his time, his manner elect
  Of giving unto man monitions kind?
May a vain king his utterance neglect
  Because the prophet is not to his mind?
Or can lip-service, ceremonies vain,
  Where human pride the prayerful soul o'ercrows,
Buy any lethe-drop for such disdain
  As this of yours, parent of wars and woes?

"For in each page of these now-cindered tomes
  Was put a prophesy of future fate,
Which might have saved a hundred tottering Romes
  When wars were loud and foemen at the gate;

And high presagings how to keep a sphere
  Whose conquest your late sorrow still may gain,
Hung like a jewelled prize of worth most dear
  Upon Rome's bosom by a silken chain.

"Of this hope, bright and boundless, your weak mind
  Has robbed the ages. O! the utter loss!
Potential glory spilt upon the blind
  Ocean of waste, where melancholy toss
Upon the chilly-sobbing homeless wave
  The wrecks of fleets which gaily left the port
To find a timeless, waste, ice-girdled grave,—
  Sorrow and solitude which passes thought.

"Can human destiny of such frail tissue
  As a weak mind like yours, O king, be wove?
Or Jove indeed, wise lord, permit the issue
  Of human hopes on kings who worthless prove
To hang, as on a rope of strands unsound?
  Then dark indeed the path which man must tread
On to the future's blank uncertain ground;—
  Yet is he wise, of gods and men the head.

"Well may you weep. Such tears are jewels fit
  For erring rulers; so weep on, O king;
This hour has seen your sin, O hallow it
  Before it dies with plenteous sorrowing;

And all your life both with a humbler heart
  Attend the gods' high sacrificial rite,
And more, be ready for Jove's voice to start
  From heaven, from earth, in darkness or daylight.

" He speaks not oftenest perhaps when all
  The listening congregation waits his word
Before the altar: faint his promptings fall,
  Like autumn leaves to earth,—too oft unheard.
Next time his gift a sibyl may not bring,
  Rather expect him in some secret place,
When to your silent heart sad thought take wing,
  Or in the warning of a loved pained face.

" And now the remnant of my treasure take."
  She ceased; and he, uplooking with a brow
Like that of one who has heard lightnings shake
  The welkin, in a forest crouching low,
Obeys her, who at length the pain withdraws
  Of her appalling passion and is gone.
For hours the whispering crowd that crossed the doors
  Saw the king musing, " silent as a stone."

SONNET.

In the ripe heyday of the summer's height
  A blighting sadness falls from cloudless skies,
  And souls which inward peer with curious eyes
Find fairest dreams the prey of foulest night.
Allurement cheats, and like a bubble breaks,
  Unstable even in memory, though in sight
  How far out-matching absent fancy's might
To paint the contour of her roseate cheeks.
What broken work is this, which breaks the hearts
  Of poets in their early manhood? Doom
  For generous breath how hard, to leave the bloom
Of fond enticing charm eye youth departs,
From Juliet's garden through sad Elsinore
Driven to Cordelia's tomb on the lone moor.

ITHURIO.

In Padua there lived long, long ago
A student, who was called "Ithurio";
The southern ear and speech shrunk from the name
He bare in the cold country whence he came,
Poor, eager, large of heart, o'er Europe wide
Knowledge to find, his longed-for noble bride;
Alone he travelled, and his scholar's eyes
In every ruined tower read histories;
Slow was his passage, for he still must stay
In many a town for many a weary day
And sell his precious book-lore for a crust;
O blithe and long he shouted when the dust
Of France fell from his shoon in Alpine grass,
And from the lofty summit of the pass
He spied the orange-groves of Italy
Steeped in the glory of her burnished sky,
And far away a rim of that famed sea
Whose murmurs have made nations wise and free

Since earliest days. With easy step he falls
Southward among the vines, and wins the walls
Of Padua, and his passionate desire
Melts into triumph. Here he may aspire
To compass the stern end of all his strife,
And through the gate of intellectual life
Pass to deep converse with the holy dead,
And clutch the whole where he had only read
Dimly some fragment of the lesson taught
By Homer, Plato, souls with magic fraught.
With such high heart he mingles with the flow
Of scholars, and is styled "Ithurio."

His home had been a cot by the bleak sea
Of Germany; a sailor's son was he;
But from a child had shunned whatever told
Of the rough waters, and that life so bold;
Books only were his love, and when he came
To manhood, zeal of knowledge, like a flame,
Eat up his powers and banished him afar
To wage alone with fate a bitter war,
Lost to soft, restful, homely tendernesses,
A father's care, a mother's dear caresses,
If haply at the goal of pilgrimage
He might assuage at last this fiery rage,
And on his forehead feel the crown of bay
Whose touch alone his passion might allay.

The spirit of the North was in his blood
Tender and patient, manly, deep, and good;
Sober and strict and temperate in all,
From pleasures which too soon the palate pall
Still had he fled, as from the cursed thing,
And grown so high that his imagining
Gave Innocence a virtue not her own,
And on sin's temples set a credulous crown.
Withal, his potent patient brain was cast
In Nature's simpler mould, and all its fast
And longing were from facts which formless lie
On history's plain some mighty unity
To build, some topping tower to reach the heaven,—
A spirit quite untouched by the sad leaven
Of haunting disputations questionings,
A fire upleaping clear, a thing with wings
Fearless to cleave to still eternities
Above this life which toils and weeps and dies.
These dreams were printed on a countenance
Severely pure and fine, lapped in a trance
Of reverie devout, absorbed, sublime;
'Twas clear his heart lived in some spotless clime
Alone with good ideals, that he talked
Often with angels, and had sometimes walked
Adown the very groves of Paradise,
And peered with satisfied and deep surmise

At the blessed gardens and the golden throne
Girt with glad choirs, and that which on it shone.
His way among the mingled throng he took,
And late and early clave unto his book;
Full soon his perfect self-gained scholarship
And ripe acquirement went from lip to lip;
All the scant knowledge of that day was his,
Its science, history, magic; but his bliss
Above all else was art; music which moves
A life within our life, with its own loves,
Pantings and prizings, fantasies and fires,
Unravelled musings, unconfessed desires;
And painting, which upon the canvas lays
The rest and peaceful sunshine of our days,
And keeps for us in stilliest ownership
The intricate lines of loveliness, the dip
Of every cherished curl of a dear head
Writ clearly for us all our lives to read.
Yet not for art his studies will he quit
Of graver weight, but, like whatever is bit
By sacred yearning and pure passion's stress,
Pursues his dream into the wilderness,
And nightly on his knees seeks Heaven's grace
That ere he die he may see Truth's own face,
Look long and deeply in her serious eyes,
And narrowly inspect the light which lies—

A ray let loose from homes of purest glow—
Effulgent on her unimagined brow.
  And very learned, very wise he grew,
And more than any of his comrades knew;
For by the past times he interpreted
The movements of the present, where they led
And whence they issued, and if right or wrong;
And when he spoke of such amid a throng
Of hasty judges, silence straight would fall,
So far his thought and words outstripped them all.
Grave and severe and self-contained and cold,
Though still so young, men thought of him as old;
He was not found at festal gatherings,
Nor took delight in harmless, pleasant things,
Nor loved the summer and the leaves' light play,
Nor easy talk in the serene noon-day,
But in relentless and devoted mood
Chased his high quarry, the supernal good.
  But how, O heart of song, could this endure?
Unhuman 'twas, by all that's great and pure!
And one May-day betwixt his book and eyes
Behold! the vision of a new hope lies,
A light come thither, all against his will,
Out of the crowd of smiles he slighted still,
A childlike face, a soft Italian form,
A blossom which could never brook a storm,

A thing of laughter and sunshiny times,
Of wiles and arts and graces and bright rimes,
A bit of all the gay world's gentleness,
A glad content, a breathing warm caress,
A flower! a shower! an air, a flitting ray,
Born to be bright and perish in a day.
He loved, our poor forlorn Ithurio!
He had no tender friend to say him "No,
This must not be; sure, this would be your doom,
This merry love, you man of books and gloom;"
His great and profound spirit wholly went
Slavelike to serve this empty blandishment,
Who deigned upon his famous name to shed
The plighted honour of her maidenhead,
And he must leave his lamp, his studious book,
To bathe his weary forehead in her look,
And pore upon her hand, and feel the roll
Of barrier-bursting passion flood his soul,
And drink the nectar of the southern air
On mornings gay and evenings debonair,
And hear the lute through all a summer night
Thrilling the oleanders with delight,
Or the untiring divine nightingale
Telling her trouble to the moonbeams pale;
And with her he must pace the busy town
From all whose towers his high-prized dreams have
flown,

And be awhile what common people are,
A life forlorn of noble strife and care,
A passing mirth, a human butterfly,
A thing to love the sun, and mate, and die.
  But there was pitying for him in high heaven;
He had so nobly wrought, so bravely striven,
He must not waste his store of spirit's might
In grief unworthy or more sad delight;
And Death, that strong good angel, took away
His lady, in a better clime to play,
Ere she had time to spoil a large heart's rest,
While she was still unfallen from her best,
Mirthful and kind, amorous, beautiful;
Upon her laughter fell a sudden lull,
And she was laid upon a damask bed
In sudden and perpetual rest, her head
Disburdened of its dreams of lover's wile,
And on her mouth its ripe undying smile.
  They brought him to the chamber where she lay.
'Twas the high prime of a midsummer day,
And she must be ere night beneath the grass.
He heard the footsteps of the servants pass
Away, and leave him lonely with the dead.
A wealth of flowers about the corpse was spread,
A cool and gentle air breathed in the place,
And every thing spoke loud of life and grace
Save that pale, lovely, coldly-smiling face!

The very soul of sweetness and of charm
Lurked in the cool shade and the scented calm,
And all that the creation has to give,
All joy which makes it worth man's while to live,
Seemed fragrant in the sighing zephyr's breath
Which came to kiss—the pallid cheek of death.
And that mute sorrow standing by the bed,
Low resting on his hands his woful head,
How came so sad an image to uprise
Amid the still delights of Paradise?
All those sick sighs and salt fast-falling tears,
And that dull pain which his whole presence wears,
Out of what pallid realm of misery
Did they invade the warm Italian sky?
Surely the damsel sleepeth in the noon
After her matin merriment, and soon
Will stir, and shake the blossoms they have laid
In mirth upon her breast, and then dismayed
Perceive her lover o'er her has been watching,
And chide till he impatient grows, and catching
His fairy in those loving arms of his
Stops her lips from reproval with a kiss.
Ay look! in verity her head she moved!
Smile, lover, in the eyes of thy beloved!
Ah no! she will not wake, he will not move,
Her blood is cold, her heart is dead to love;

There she must lie until the people come
To carry her to her abiding home
Out of the happy breathing of the noon.
And, sadder yet to say, 'twould be no boon
To wake her and to give her back again
To him who stands there moveless, crushed with pain.
  In one short hour of laughter or of tears
Often we seem to live a thousand years;
Time is no gauge a life's despair to measure,
Nor count the jewels of joy's house of treasure;
But when the supreme hour of action looms
Before us, or high passion, or grief's glooms,
We part the veil which on this earth of ours
Shields from vile wear the spirit's finest powers.
O the fair radiance of a victor's eye
Exulting in a blood-bought victory!
O the wild pain of youth's dear-valued breath
Despairing at the imminence of death!
Triumph of martyr! smile of dying saint!
Such be the sights which poets live to paint.
O 'twas not a weak man who by that bed
In utter anguish bent his throbbing head,
Bewailing that fair grace should pass away
Out of the rapture of love's early day,
That Death should covet from us the short bliss
Of a fond smile, a tender word, a kiss,

And all the wealth and wonder of the spheres
Succumb to the encroachment of chill years;
More than a man grew poor Ithurio,
Transfigured, altered by his awful woe.
How he had loved that dead child! no such love
Had his been as could ever brook to rove,
A honey-seeking bee, from bloom to bloom,
But ardour, husbanded within the gloom
Of a most holy soul and continent,
Lavishly on one thought, one object spent;
And she lies cold before him, and his grief
Like a mad spirit, thirsty for relief,
Wanders from earth to heaven, cursing its lot,
Seeking for light and hope, and finding not.

Upon her white bier through the orange-trees
They took her, and the priest upon his knees
Has begged for her soft rest and waking bright,
And her dear eyes are hidden from the light
Low in the sod where cold and vile things creep,
But she cares not, so perfect is her sleep,—
And all her wavy hair, each precious tress,
Is gone to be the prey of hideousness,
Her glorious shape which in the dance so shone
Must soon to withered skin and bleaching bone
Be shrunk, and that unequalled lyre her voice
A listening lover never will rejoice,

Seeming to set the crowning harmony
On all earth's music. Cold and low to lie,
Mute, senseless, deaf, forgotten, in the grave,
This is the term youth, love, and laughter have.
  And did Ithurio to his books return
And find old aims reanimated burn?
Have I not said that from a child he grew
To hopes and heights kenned only by a few,
And could it be that this forlorn event
Should pass, nor in his being leave a rent?
What time his melancholy won some calm
He walked one evening in a grove of palm,
And cried, "At last from stringent sorrow free
What rest remains, O stricken soul, for thee?"
Long did he muse on how so strange a birth
Of passions for a lady of bright mirth
Up in his solitary heart could rise;
Long of his love, how mighty, how unwise,
And of love's greatness and life's littleness,
And what a universe of wild distress
Or all-devouring pleasure at command
Lies in the largess of a maiden's hand;
And most of Death, whom he had seen anear
In his tremendous pageantry of fear,
Of vanity, which boldly stalks abroad,
Of human pride, which crowding down the road

That leads by flowery paths to founts of tears
Sweeps on, and still a pleased expression wears ;
And how to one whose aim is highest set
Lapse is most sinful, and must needs beget
Deepest repentance and disgust most drear,
Back-peering hate and forward-looking fear ;
And how we needs our promptings must fulfil
And use, to cure from spiritual ill,
The salve which Nature proffers ; and how all
His past ambition on his heart did pall,
And that great aim to be the wisest head
In Italy, had vanished quite and sped
Out of the black-draped portal of his mind,
Leaving cold vacancy and care behind ;—
Long wondered what kind spirit may be charmed
Into those halls, by love so lately warmed,
What expectation, longing or endeavour,
Could rule him, perished to the past for ever,
Drop from the skies to pity and to save,
And gently guide from manhood to the grave,
Stretch a firm hand, beguile away his tears,
And play sweet music to the passing years ;—
Long prayed that some such miracle might be
To make him feel a man again, and free ;—
Till—it was midnight now—upon a height
Above the town he stood : the moon was bright :

The world before him, lapped in slumber sweet,
Seemed to him like an altar at God's feet,
And all its silent breath and each low sound
Incense upwreathing from the sacred ground,—
Even as the church tolled twelve unto the night,
His doubt was done, he felt, he saw aright.
  And when the morrow of his vigil rose,
With quiet step a monastery's close
He sought, and said, "Good fathers, I am come
To crave admittance to your peaceful home:
Open your pitying gates, and let me in,
Worn by the world and weary, stained by sin.
And of my past forbear to ask: we all
By devious ways, finding that on us pall
Our old ecstatic life-love and great joy,
The glowing zest and passion of the boy,
Have come to this sweet brotherhood of pain;
Unquestioned, solaced, here may I remain;
Enough that—oh! ye distant dreaming towers,
Ye sunlit gardens marvellous with flowers,
Ye summers and ye autumns, gay and gold,
Ye ardent spring-tides and blithe winters cold,
Heart-liftings high and raptures of a man
Fade from you here, and sink in silence wan;—
Open your pitying gates and let me in,
Worn by the world and weary, stained by sin."

So to his cell he went, and many a year
In holiest silence, far from any fear,
Offered to Heaven his sacrifice of pain,
His humble doings and his sad tears' rain;
And found at last in charitable deed,
And tender ministrations of his creed,
And night-long prayer, when through his casement bright
Looked in the happy watchers of the night,
A sense of conquest and security,
Assurance and repose serene and high,
An inner well of ever-springing bliss
Holy and strange above all else that is;
A voice in silence speaking very clear
Beyond all earthly murmurs prized and dear.

LOVE'S EVOLUTION.

CAN Love, high Love, with mocking glamour shine?
  Can He, who is the presence of the power
  Whose wing, breath, whisper are the utmost dower
Low dust may dare to hope for of divine,—

Love! we may scorn all proof that he is best,
  All refutation of each rival boast,
  Whose bosoms, like a monarch's honoured host,
Warm into fire to give him house and rest,—

And can this God o'erstep himself, and make
  Havoc in hearts who needs his gifts must rue?
  O soul of heaven and earth, it is not true;
Love is true Love; naught can my strong creed shake.

Then not a soft-cheeked stealer as of eld
  Into the ear on honeyed zephyr blown
  Our new-world Eros : he is graver grown,
Such birth and death, such pain he has beheld.

For he has been on battle-fields, trod pale
  The charnel-floor, and by the sick-bed sighed,
  And seen his altar devil-parodied
In the coarse limbo of the harlot's sale.

So is he whole and perfect grown : all tears
  Which men and women to the silent wall
  On countless nights of anguish have let fall,
And all the terrors of ten thousand years,

The strifes, the conquests, the heroic will
  Which sets itself to brave disgrace, and lead
  Weak feet from miry slough to sunny mead
Have poured into his blood their good and ill.

O mystic truth, and to all large truths kin
  Whose contradiction sums the tested gold
  Of thought's long growth, our love grown wise
    and bold
Adapts his passion to the war with sin.

He, the complete, the world's perfected soul,
  (O happy ye, who grow into the grace
  Of his new spell, and find his fairer face!)
Admits such limitation, yet being whole.

He wasteth not his breath on any flower,
  Nor lingereth on a lady's pearly hand,
  The dreamy pastures of his old life's land
He has foregone for realms of wider power;

The ghost of him, only the ghost, abides
  Sad by the table when the feast is done,
  With yearning gleam of melting eye, and moan
Of sick desire through the pale myrtles glides.

Ἔρως διδάσκαλος.

When life is born, when sapling souls put forth
  Fresh younglings, green and gallant in the air,
When skies are heavens, when every joy seems worth
  The sum of all antiquity's cold care,
When soft eyes court the foliage for repose,
  And fair cheeks claim charmed breezes for their due,
And sweet lips chide because the day will close
  Long, long ere surfeit comes of green and blue ;—

Oh, not with icy word to anticipate
  The inevitable change which in its hour
Falls not unkindly from the lap of fate
  Were wisdom. Rain and breezes for the flower,
Spring for the corn, summer and autumn ripe,
  Sun for the vine whose warm blood steals the heat,
Unrifled home of nest for the bird's pipe,
  And growth, slow mighty growth, for man is meet.

And after all the earlier sanctities
  Love first, who in another's soul discovers
His own true self, and glides 'twixt glancing eyes,
  Comes to be the wise tutor of true lovers,
And the expanding inward powers attain
  Unto a wider world in which to range,
Till out of passion's fire and pining pain
  The dual life of wedded hopes comes strange.

So, in the fulness of the days, by love,
  Mild love, which is the heart's maturer crown,
And by sweet gratitude, that gentle dove
  Whose bosom throbs with bliss such bliss to own,
The single soul within two human breasts
  Merges herself in the wide world's desire,
Free, free for heaven, as pines on mountain crests
Whose brows are daily steeped in dawn's gold fire.

And when such victors with glad gift put forth
  Ripe flower and fruitage in the liberal air,
Say, is the hallowed breath they breathe not worth
  The sum of all antiquity's cold care?
Thrice blessed our fortune who so richly hive
  Honey of happy dreams with still delight,
Then find a new heaven in the power to give,
  And soar, from birth to death, from height to height.

SONG.

O MAIDEN, glad and gentle,
  By this dear hand I swear,
Your words and very presence
  Shall come where'er I fare.
I praise God that no longer
  Bitter or cold can be
The life on which your sweet love
  Is shed so full and free.

You are so pure and holy,
  So alien from all shame,
Even death itself were joyous
  So might I speak your name;
Seeing through mists hung o'er me
  Those eyes like stars which shine,
Twin lights to bless the dark earth
  With power and peace divine.

THE QUEST OF PSYCHE.

A SPENSERIAN STUDY.

I.

GREAT Gloriana! light of Faeryland!
  Light art thou in thy love of sun and air!
Thy soul is as the azure, pure and grand,
  Pure as the morning, breezy, fresh and fair
  As is thy presence fine and debonair;
O soul of chivalry and poesy
  And bravery and chastity and rare
Endeavour and achievement, queen most high,
Accept a verse in praise of thy old sovereignty.

II.

Thou chosest as thy home the land of dreams,
  Of dreams more real in their fantastic kind
Than mere cold truth which falsely actual seems;
  There, in a land of mirth and morning, wind,
  Vapour of cloud, and sheeny lights which blind,
Where woods are ever tinged with sunbreak, streams
  Vocal of dawn, thee throned thy votaries find :
Thy city is a fabric of pale beams,
Pearly in the rich blue o'er wood and crag it gleams.

III.

And music tingles ever through its spires,
  Fitful and fairy-like, from harps unseen :
O mystic streets, where all divine desires
  In all earth's noblest spirits which have been
  Abide in knightly shape and mail's bright sheen !
Where what with men is yearning vain and slight
  Transfigured is to love divine, serene ;
The very presence of the accomplished right
Blessing all waking works, soothing all dreams by night.

IV.

The grave of pain, the banishment of tears
  Thy precincts are, the haunt of holiness,
The garner of the glory of the years,
  The goal of all deep prayers, the dear recess
  Of upward-climbing dreams. Dismay, distress
Melt in these halls to laughter, music, joy;
  The cold, the careworn and the comfortless
Win in this peace the ease of girl and boy,
So potent virtue is and light without alloy.

V.

A billowy sea of surging tree-tops, shade,
  Vastness and everlasting murmurings;
Eternal melody the forest made,
  Upon whose floor lay loveliest hidden things,
  Souls of meek flowers, beetles with glowing wings,
Cool grots and crystal brooks and hues of gold;
  And when a storm with angry trumpetings
Over the bowed trees in his fury rolled
'Twas of such secret treasuries his wild notes told.

VI.

A rim of azure hills, the pencil trace
  In liquid blue of Pan on leisure day,
Airy and exquisite, beneath the face
  Of glassy sky bounded the forest. Gay
  The light, the glory of the sunshine, lay
Upon them, that they seemed the very height
  Of utter bliss for souls; from these away
Into the dark woods stretched a line of light,
A mound whereon was built the Faery-city bright.

VII.

There dwell the faery-folk high-chivalrous,
  Proud knights with stature huge and child-like mind
More simply valiant than the best of us;
  And ladies holy, beautiful and kind,
  To be the crown of heroes' toil designed,
Stately and tender, mirthful, frank, and free,
  And inwardly to excellence inclined
If by a smile they might some solace be
To a devoutly fond unresting chivalry.

VIII.

Foemen ne'er stood the onset of a son
  Of such a city, since within the girth
Of her white walls the happy garrison
  Utterly loved their queen, a goddess worth
  Absolute service. Also, what on earth
Like a sharp thorn near the rose Love doth lie,
  Making high Love a fear, stained not the mirth
Of their dear days: wherefore to warrior high
'Twas as a glimpse of heaven when a fair maid tripped
    by.

IX.

But the loosed Ariel of Prospero
  Who took the yoke for love of Gloriane
Over the woods of the weird earth must go
  Daily, to seek within their shadowy span
  Girl in alarm or brave distressful man
Fainting for aid and the alleving spear:
  His light vans sweep the threshold of the wan
New morning, and at evening he must bear
His tale of dove-like quest to that kind ark, her ear.

X.

Upon a day the folk upon the walls
  In evening indolence relaxed, and joy
Of flattering light which slantwise warmly falls
  Marked the returning flutter of the boy
  Over them in the light without alloy
Butterflywise cleave to the citadel;
  Whereon a belfry-summons did annoy
With cruel clash the vespers' silent spell,
And like a rain of sound upon the valley fell.

XI.

Anon a conclave, and a dais gleaming,
  White light of queenhood on it dimly grand
Amid high lords attendant: silence seeming
  Cowers beneath the wafting of her wand,
  And then her voice, floating above the band,
Instils delight into their loyal ears
  Calling some champion of unvanquished hand
To step beyond the circle of his peers,
And be a bane for grief, a remedy for tears.

XII.

" A sorrow, shedding tears of bitterness
  Far, far away on the dark earth, my knights,
Is ever wont to chill our happiness
  With discontent at its unshared delights :
  Days unlaborious and luxurious nights,
Or ease, to lean upon an idle sword,
  Tempt not the heroes of a thousand fights
To bend frail knees to leisure as their lord,
When suffering claims redress, and honour gives the
    word.

XIII.

" We reign in glory on our radiant height,
  We watch the fair procession of the hours,
Inviolate eternity of light,
  Security of bliss, unfading bowers,
  Beauty and peace and love thrice-blessed are ours ;
Yours too o'er moor and rugged wild the quest,
  The long crusade against sin's Paynim powers,
The creed of action and the intense unrest,
The insufferable fire of God within the breast.

XIV.

" Ho ! for a champion ! shall no spear be found
  For every sorrow ? shall one single isle
In all life's ocean with vain cries resound
  For succour, while we idly sit and smile ?
  This very day the fiend with subtlest wile
For fairest feet has wrought a biting chain,
  For whitest soul a prison dark and vile,
That in the world there may be wretched pain
Where erst pure joy of heart, large dower of hope did
    reign."

XV.

Best to behold of any grace in youth
  Is chastity ; and next is ranked this sight,
When with bowed humble head in simple truth
  With stainless soul a noble virgin knight
  From lip of honoured king or ladye bright
Takes charge some arduous, famous deed to do :
  Oh, search through every land, a gladder sight
You will not see, wherever you may go :
High zeal in tender years has power to touch hearts so.

XVI.

Oh, brave to see, with honourable brow
  Over the queen's feet bending, Eusebes
His pain of passion eases in a vow
  Soothly to spring, a pure will, from his knees,
  Take horse, and ride wherever she may please:
Her saintly hands are laid upon his head,
  Her strange voice, softer than a summer breeze,
Around him like a dreamy spell is shed,
That all his burning heart with valiant force is fed.

XVII.

Commissioned soldier of the mighty good,
  Why should he tarry? For he needs must fare
Through many a mazy mile of tangled wood
  To seek the grief whose aid is his dear care.
  Innumerable round the palace-stair
The people wait his parting open-eyed;
  In white perfection Gloriane is there,
A thousand gleaming warriors at her side,
Wealth of heroic might, and beauty in her pride:

XVIII.

Into whose presence, like some golden glory
  Of thought which floods a noble poet's mind,
Or like whatever beauty bright in story
  Witched the dead world to bliss, and leaves behind
  Faintly upon the cloudy past defined
A wonderment, an awe, and a desire,
  Rides Eusebes on war-horse swift as wind;
Clear eyes alight with gleaming ardour's fire;
This scroll upon his shield, "I seek and I aspire."

XIX.

A blare of silver trumpets cleft the wind
  And pealed up heavenward: all the mazy height
Capped with white sheeny turrets, warrior-lined,
  Echoed that music, trembling with delight,
  Which, like some mighty eagle, strong in flight,
Emulous of infinity, cloudward due,
  Loitered some moments o'er the concourse bright,
Then skyward winging, like a shaft shot true,
Buried its glowing heart deep in the far, clear blue.

XX.

And when the trumpets and the gay folks' cheering
  Were done, and silence supervened, he spurred
His creamy charger down the height, appearing
  Alone at the cliff's base : the curious herd
  Long listed, if perchance a parting word
Might scale the steep and touch their tingling ears,
  But still he sat and spake not, neither stirred,
Musing : men wonder mute : maids melt in tears :—
At last he waves his hand and dreamlike disappears.

XXI.

So on its glorious mission goodness went.
  Meantime, sore sorrowed for some knightly aid
Psyche ; for agony and languishment
  Had killed the joyance of that heavenly maid :
  Erewhile in earth's green woods her feet had strayed,
And as her beauty, so had her joy been,
  A solemn peace which naught could make afraid ;
Her white grace wandered in the woods' dark green
And all the reverent shepherds praised her as their queen.

XXII.

For Gloriane had given the maid to men
  By loveliness to lead their hearts to good;
She taught the cottiers in the grassy glen,
  The foresters who ranged the mazy wood;
  Scarcely their simple spirits understood
All the deep meaning of her learned word,
  But, when they watched her eyes, a sacred flood
Of light made plain the message which they heard,
And all their souls to emulate great deeds were stirred.

XXIII.

Her simple home was by a wide white stream,
  Deep in a homely dell, secure, well-tilled,
Happy with smiling homesteads, like a dream
  With isles of dotted loveliness fulfilled;
  There did the Faery wrights her low cot build,
Wherein in sanctity of freedom she
  The inward meanings of her mind distilled
In forms of purest art, of minstrelsy,
Painting and verse of deep design and dignity.

XXIV.

And she was happy in a holy wise,
  Whereas her fancy might with subtle thought
Flame into frenzy, and her hands devise
  With skill unerring, strange, inspired, untaught,
  Some image from the halls of Faery caught,
That folk might feel in soaring song enchanted,
  Or see in sculpture with divine soul fraught,
Or in wise painting which no magic wanted
The sacrament of grace, for which the full heart
    panted.

XXV.

In loneliness of loveliness she wove
  Visions of grandeur into forms of art
To be the image of indwelling love
  Whose happy wings were folded in her heart:
  But, viewing how in majesty apart
She witnessed to the earth of purity,
  The Powers of Darkness launched a bitter dart
And slew her mountain-sister Liberty,
That she for many a year a captive sad might be.

XXVI.

Those hands whose deep, dead joy was fashioning
  To vital beauty shapeless hideousness
Must wither in hard fetters, hindering
  Their instinct to adorn, and to express
  Her inward need to beautify and bless;
And round her, chained with gyves of iron sore,
  A lion roved to hold her in duress;
All day he paced her prison-house before,
All night the woods resounded with his hollow roar.

XXVII.

Slender, pale, trembling, in her eyes a fear,
  A horror, a wild longing to be free!
To walk once more at ease around her dear
  Old home, and breathe the breath of liberty!
  Pallid, as tossed with care and fantasy,
As capable of all, but all denied,
  Yet, oh how gracious in her grief was she!
Beholding her, a thousand knights had died
To free her feet to walk once more in virgin pride.

XXVIII.

'Twas Archimage,* the Faery ladye's foe,
  Who did dear Psyche such despiteful shame,
Because his only task is to bring woe
  On all that is of white and happy fame;
  And can you ask that hungry lion's name,
Young man, you who with fearless foot and bold
  Up to Thought's table-land of promise came
To cull the flowers which fade not nor grow old,
And found that there which chilled your passion's fervour cold?

XXIX.

This Archimage grieved in his heart to see
  A knight of Faery, tested, zealous, strong,
Sent by the empress of all chivalry
  To loose bound Psyche from his firm-weaved wrong,
  And in his murky bosom pondered long
How to divert from his divine intent
  Bold Eusches. At last he calls his throng
Of servant spirits in hellish Parliament,
If haply from its aim that great soul might be bent.

* "Faerie Queene," Canto I., etc.

XXX.

Oh, then into his cavern crowding in
  What cursed fiends, what awful spectres came!
Unchastity the first, that naked sin,
  Leading the brother of her ancient shame,
  The king of tipsy mirth, whom mortals name
Momus; and cold Self-love and Siren Ease,
  Discord, Ambition, Greed with cheeks aflame,
Contempt and Sloth and Fear with quivering knees,
Passion, and pale Excess with his sick son Disease.

XXXI.

From these he chose a witch of wondrous beauty
  Who many a holy hero had beguiled
And bade her lure him from the way of duty:
  Free Pleasure was her name, the fatal child
  Of erring thought and selfish longing: wild
The joys she proffered, and her music-voice,
  And that extreme enchantment when she smiled,
Witched all weak hearts to make her love their choice,
Who seemed to toil that men might everywhere rejoice.

XXXII.

But Eusebes was pricking through the wood :
  One thrush upon the spray was carolling :
His heart was brimming full of all things good,
  And like that blessed bird did gaily sing
  With love for sunlight and the warm, fresh spring :
The soul of ruddy, healthy youth he rode
  Under the green boughs gently whispering ;
His yellow love-locks on his shoulders flowed ;
Splendidly armed was he, and a proud steed bestrode.

XXXIII.

He knew no fear, he knew no inward ill,
  Whose conscience was a sheet of stainless white ;
Full was his love of life, but deeper still
  His zeal for truth, his yearning for the right ;
  And he was glad and generous and bright
And courteous, modest, gentle of address ;—
  A very loyal, fine and lovely knight !
Brave as a lion in the wilderness,
Tender as a young child to suffering or distress.

XXXIV.

And, as he rode, he sang "O blessed day
  Whereon in health and might and merriment
I ride through green woods in the jolly May,
  With loyal thoughts on worthy errand sent
  To help a damsel sweet in prison pent:
O joy for the free heart of loyalty
  Which sings for joyance and serene content,
And loves to live but does not fear to die,
And laughs to find the world so fair, so bright the sky."

XXXV.

Beside the margin of a trickling flood
  Anon alighting on a mossy brink
He laves his hot face in the waters good,
  Then lies at ease to rest his steed, and think
  A young man's thoughts, watching the morning pink
Peep through the green stems and the tangled weeds;
  Deep, deep in dreamland far his fancies sink,
On visionary hopes his spirit feeds
Of golden smiles and gracious queens and glorious
    deeds.

XXXVI.

Deep is the peril of that languid hour
  When to soft ease and gentle languishment,
In the rich wealth of feeling's freshest power,
  The heart of youth, fearing no ill, is lent:
  Surely sweet youth for happy joy is meant,
And all the royal state of earth his slave,
  But forward-looking hearts on fair aims bent,
Seeking no sweets, but pleased with what they have,
Both taste earth's ripest fruit, and cheat the envious grave.

XXXVII.

Fall here a veil of shielding cloud to screen
  What white discovery of snowy breast
And beckoning hand the shadowy boughs between
  Invites him to fond joy and careless rest
  Lulled in unholy dream and sensual nest;
But on his hair the hand of Gloriane
  Long time had lingered while her dear voice blest;
And from brief trouble of a tempted man
Forward he fares whole-hearted through the forest wan.

XXXVIII.

Also, most kindly veil from cloudland, shield
  His warlike work, the battle and the blood,—
Such horrid scenes too cruelly revealed
  Mar the mild charm of Spenser's gentler mood ;—
  Enough that, victor in the fray, he stood
Proud manly might frail virgin grace beside,
  And led his Psyche homeward through the wood
In the world's holiday, the gay springtide,
To be for aye in Paradise his sainted bride,

XXXIX.

Crying, " O wondrous to have gained this hand !
  And now what gift more golden can o'erpay
My service than with you to watch the land
  Wake to the glory of God's gracious May,
  And the green woodlands wave, and the birds play ?
To be a man of thirty blameless years,
  And conqueror in a renowned affray,
Made blessed by your grace beyond my peers,
Loyal, and as great Mars immaculate of fears."

XL.

Behold them the steep Faery height ascending
  Out of Earth's tangled woodland to the gate
Where all the Faery knighthood was attending
  Their safe return, and the divine queen sate
  To greet her champion and his peerless mate !
Oh, dear is triumph after fearful fight
  With the fell furies of an adverse fate !
So Eusebes and Psyche from our sight
Pass, and are lost in grand eternities of light.

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